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Information for clergy and
lay leaders of the UCC

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Here is the Good News of the United Church of Christ, especially edited for local congregations and designed to keep members in touch with the wider church. Each story is short and complete and can stand alone, ready to drop into the weekly bulletin or the monthly newsletter. The code at the end of some entries refers interested readers to a more comprehensive story in *United Church News*.

THE HEART IS IN THE RIGHT PLACE One Great Hour of Sharing is the most popular all-church offering in the UCC. Just over three-quarters of our 6,200 local churches participate in contributing money that goes for both foreign and domestic relief, including aid this month to heavily damaged UCC churches in earthquake-stricken Los Angeles.

While UCC members are generous, a new survey suggests there is considerable concern at the congregational level over what is seen as too many national requests. There are presently four all-church offerings and two appeals. Look for possible changes.

—UCN, 2/94

UCC RESPONDS TO L.A. QUAKE Almost before the dust had settled, UCC money was speeding to the aid of earthquake victims in Los Angeles. The UC Board for World Ministries wired \$5,000 each to the Southern Cal. Conference and Church World Service. At least six UCC churches near the epicenter were damaged. Checks earmarked "California Earthquake" can be sent to the World Board at 475 Riverside Dr., 16th fl., New York, NY 10115.

UNITED CHURCH PIONEERS IN AIDS CURRICULUM The UCC has become the first religious group to publish a family-oriented AIDS curriculum. Five years in preparation, the 1,000-page "Affirming Persons — Saving Lives" is rooted in Christian values. It takes a middle ground between secular models that reject moral values and conservative religious attitudes that ignore safe sex practices.

UCC CHURCH FIGHTS HATE WITH LOVE Members of First Congregational UCC in Topeka, Kan., have come to the aid of a neighboring church picketed every Sunday by a strident band of gay bashers. The UCC "witnesses" carry placards with such messages as "God's Love Speaks Loudest" to counter the homophobes' signs with slogans like "God Hates Fags."

IT'S NOT YOUR EVERY DAY PLEDGE Because she wanted to see her church engaged in more outreach, Ruth Parker has pledged a million dollars to the UCC's "Make A Difference" campaign. It is the largest gift given to any UCC fund raising effort. President Paul H. Sherry thanked the Sandusky, Ohio, woman "for believing in us."

—UCN, 2/94

WHAT'S IN A NAME? VISN, the religious cable network, has changed its name to the Faith & Values Channel. "We needed a name which was viewer friendly," says VISN president Nelson Price, "a name that clearly says who we are, what we're about and can help viewers find the channel." The UCC is a charter member of the network and programs regularly on it.

—UCN, 2/94

FIGHT TV VIOLENCE WITH A PEN If you don't like violence on the tube, conventional wisdom says turn it off or switch to the Disney Channel. "That is a copout," says UCC communications director Beverly J. Chain. Complain, she says. Write a letter to your local station's program director citing the particular program and the incident that was offensive. Stations are sensitive to viewers' opinions, she notes. The prevailing wisdom among station management is that 10 angry letters probably represents the thinking of hundreds of viewers. Don't accept excess violence on TV news, Chain adds. Tell the news director there is more than one way to illustrate a news story. Chain debated the violence factor on the "Building a World Fit for Children" radio show with a Cleveland TV anchorman who acknowledged management's sensitivity to the mailbox. For more strategies, write KYP for the NCC statement on Violence in the Media.

ONE TIME OLYMPIC HOPEFUL BECOMES MISSIONARY A one time Colorado state figure skating champion, who just missed qualifying for the 1984 U.S. Olympic Team, is teaming up with her husband to serve in Africa as a missionary. Tamara and John Rodenberg, both ordained, will serve in Swaziland, Africa, at the invitation of the Christian Apostolic Holy Spirit Church in Zion, as theological educators. They are joint appointees of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the UCC. The nearest skating rink is a three hour car ride away in Johannesburg, South Africa.

WOMEN 1, MEN 100 Women have finally won one in India, report UCC missionaries Padma and David Gallup. When a woman applied for ordination in the Church of South India, a disgruntled male parishioner sued to stop the proceedings. Wisely, the lawyer for the defendant argued not on theological grounds but on the basis of the denial of his client's civil rights. The courts ruled in her favor.

WILL PRIVATE IVAN PRAY ON DUTY? Chaplains may be returning to the Russian army. A high ranking Pentagon committee, headed by UCC Navy Chaplain Gary R. Pollitt, has been exploring with Russian and other Eastern European countries the possibility of reintroducing chaplains into the military. Czarist Russia once had the world's only floating church in its Navy.

Keeping You Posted is edited by William C. Winslow and produced monthly by the UCC Office of Communication, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115-1100.

Send story ideas to: William C. Winslow, UCC Office of Communication, 475 Riverside Dr., 16th fl., New York, NY 10115.

BUDDY, CAN YOU SPARE \$25,000? The Johnson Wax people will give up to that amount to local churches that sponsor community coalitions to help people with chronic health problems. Write Kenneth G. Johnson, MD, director, Faith in Action, Health Services Research Center, 368 Broadway, Suite 105, Kingston, NY 12401, tel., (914) 331-0016.

Meanwhile the UCC Coordinating Center for Women is also offering modest grants – \$1,000-\$3,000 each – for local church programs which focus on families in crisis. Write CCW, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, Ohio, 44115, tel., (216) 736-2150.

ARE YOU A LIBERAL RACIST? If you consider yourself informed, travel in multi-racial circles, are multi-lingual and have been exposed to diversity, take this test. When people of color are given real positions of power, do you remove both your presence and resources? When an African American gets a good job, do you mutter under your breath something about “white male and no longer acceptable for jobs and promotions?” Do you treat minorities as objects of mission? When working with minorities, do you tend to assume a position of authority?

– UCN, 2/94

CAN I QUOTE YOU? “Religion, the natural response to Ultimate Reality, is as varied and colorful as an English garden; it is unacceptable, therefore, to suggest which religious flowers are preferred by the Divine Gardener.” – the Rev. Richard T. Schellhase, UCC representative to the Parliament of the World Religions.

– UCN, 12/93

DON'T MESS WITH “EDELWEISS” You can sing the popular song from Rogers' and Hammerstein's “The Sound of Music,” but don't add your own lyrics. If you do, you'll be hearing the sound of a lawsuit. The material is protected by copyrights and the authors said no tinkering.

ETCETERA Have you ever thought of worship as a “series of actions separated by punctuation”? Sandy Johnson does. As a pastor in Chewelah, Wash., she likes to think that singing the Doxology after the offering is a kind of exclamation point and the Passing of the Peace is a space between paragraphs. Joining hands for benediction puts a period at the end of worship, she says.

“Take some time out this week and think about the ways your time is ‘punctuated,’” she suggests, “and consider whether you might like to add a faithful comma or two.”

– UCN, 2/94

A MULTITUDE OF VOICES Folks at Richfield (Ohio) UCC believe benediction is saying good things about yourself. So that's what they do. Pastor Gary Arndt asks each member to “claim who you are as a child of God. Claim your God-given gifts.” Then everyone speaks out loud at the same time, claiming their identity as God's children.

THE ULTIMATE HOMECOMING? Members of First Parish Church in York, Maine, wanted to make sure their retiring pastor, William Inderstrott, would come back; so they gave him a plot in the church burial ground.